United Nations A/C.2/64/SR.32

General Assembly
Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
27 January 2009

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 32nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 5 November 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Mohamed Chérif Diallo (Vice-Chairperson) (Guinea)

Contents

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*)

Agenda item 59: Towards global partnerships

Agenda item 133: Programme planning

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

09-59467 (E)

Please recycle

In the absence of Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Mr. Mohamed Chérif Diallo (Guinea), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*) (A/C.2/64/L.10)

Draft resolution on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

1. **Ms. Osman** (Sudan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.10 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Agenda item 59: Towards global partnerships (A/64/337, A/C.2/64/L.14)

2. **Ms. Busza** (Principal Officer, Strategic Planning Unit) introduced the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector" (A/64/337).

3. The United Nations Global Compact continued to work to ensure that business advanced the Organization's goals, and had contributed significantly to the emerging global consensus on the value of corporate responsibility for both business and society. Such progress would not have been possible without the support of Member States.

4. Governments defined the space within which corporate responsibility existed and evolved. Only within a favourable investment and socio-political environment could voluntary initiatives such as the Global Compact produce widespread positive change. Because of its mandate, convening power and global reach, the Global Compact was uniquely placed to change the way in which business contributed to society. However, continued progress was possible only with Member States' strong support.

5. Governments should continue to encourage responsible business practices at the national and international levels; to promote accountability and transparency through public disclosure; and to engage in advocacy, educational support and awareness-raising on such issues as corruption, climate change and health. Progress in those areas was particularly important in view of the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to review the progress made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to be held in September 2010, and the United Nations Global Compact Leaders Summit, to be held in June 2010.

6. **Mr. Rutgersson** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Liechtenstein and the Republic of Moldova, said that good progress had clearly been made in strengthening the relationship between the United Nations system and the private sector. The European Union welcomed the revised "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Business Community", now called the "Guidelines on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Private Sector", and the new United Nations and Business website, both of which would contribute to United Nations system efforts further to strengthen partnerships with the private sector. The MDGs and other political aims and goals of the Organization could be achieved only through the active participation of Governments, the private sector and civil society. The Global Compact must promote dialogue and partnerships between the United Nations and the private sector with a view to furthering the Organization's goals.

7. While the United Nations was a unique partner for companies that operated globally, private sector actors should not be allowed to use the United Nations as a marketing tool in order to be perceived as good corporate citizens without meeting their obligations, but must commit themselves to promoting the shared values and vision of progress that were mutually beneficial for all. The global economic and financial crisis had underscored the dangers of a definition of risks and opportunities that failed to take account of environmental, social and governance issues, and had increased the risk of corporations sidelining environmental and social concerns, rather than seeing sustainable business models as an opportunity to create competitive advantage. To support corporations in carrying out good practices in partnerships, the United Nations should provide concrete guidance.

8. The European Union welcomed the ongoing international debate on corporate social responsibility, which should be promoted at all levels. The United Nations, particularly the Global Compact, played a key role in that regard. The following week, a conference

on social corporate responsibility would take place in Stockholm, Sweden, with the participation of Governments, civil society, the private sector, trade unions and academia.

9. For partnerships to be improved and preconditions for effective scaling up and replication of successful partnerships created, best practices and lessons learned must be shared effectively and transparently. How the United Nations coordinated and used the expertise, activities and knowledge of Governments, organizations and business communities was key in that regard. Regional engagements could be further elaborated. In that regard, the European Union welcomed the cooperation between the African Union and the Global Compact Office.

10. The European Union welcomed the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) consultation on updating the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises as an important step forward regarding how Governments should encourage best practice among multinational enterprises operating in or from countries adhering to the Guidelines. The Global Compact should closely monitor progress on the issue. The European Union also welcomed the protect, respect and remedy policy framework presented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises (see A/HRC/8/5 and A/HRC/11/13), as well as the Global Compact's further engagement on the issue of business and human rights.

11. The United Nations must include all relevant actors in its work, as the relationship between the public and private sectors was mutually beneficial. The Organization would find it easier to meet its objectives with the cooperation, contributions and experience of the private sector, and the private sector, particularly multinationals, would benefit from the enabling environment created by the fostering of sustainable development, and peace and security. In short, everyone benefited from increased efforts towards global partnerships.

12. **Mr. Dhakal** (Nepal), speaking on behalf of the least developed countries, said that the various global compacts for development were based on two important principles: national ownership and global partnership for development. Conference after conference, it had been said that developing countries would own their development strategies and that developed countries would provide necessary partnership and support in implementing them. Yet, while developing countries had made significant progress with respect to national ownership, the global partnership for development remained an unfulfilled dream. The least developed countries were yet to receive promised development aid, debt relief, trade concessions, technology transfer and capacity-building. Commitments should be implemented sincerely, in a true spirit of global partnership: rescuing the least developed countries from poverty, conflicts, disasters and food insecurity, exacerbated by the effects of climate change and the economic crisis, was a global responsibility. The least developed countries could not address such challenges alone.

13. For there to be a true global partnership and for development goals to be met at the national, regional and global levels, all stakeholders, including the private sector, must play a role and assume their responsibilities. Internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, would be met only if partnerships between the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) were made stronger and more effective. The United Nations system must redouble its efforts to engage in effective, sustainable and transparent partnerships that addressed the needs of the least developed countries. In particular, there was a need to develop a more strategic approach, to build capacity, to enhance support for small and medium-sized enterprises, to ensure alignment between global partnerships and national development agendas, and to build an enabling framework.

14. A strengthened global partnership was critical to efforts to address the challenges of growth and development effectively. Moreover, benchmarks and indicators were needed to chart progress in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. The sharing of best practices would provide much-needed clarity in that regard and was therefore welcome.

15. Lastly, the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2011, should be guided by a spirit of global partnership. The least developed countries would work constructively with their partners to address existing and emerging development challenges.

16. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that promotion of socially responsible investment had been one of the pillars of Colombian policy in recent years. Fostering entrepreneurship at every level had played a significant role in the implementation of the country's strategies to favour economic growth and social well-being. However, limits on incentives for entrepreneurship and investment must be set by social responsibility.

17. Social responsibility not only implied transparency in the activities of the private sector; it also involved a commitment to participate constructively in development, and entailed going beyond the mere fulfilment of minimum legal requirements in order to contribute, through investment, to the construction of more stable and democratic societies. With that perspective, Colombia warmly welcomed United Nations system initiatives to promote the engagement of the private sector in the collective efforts to consolidate global partnerships and achieve the Organization's objectives, in particular the MDGs.

18. All relevant actors — Member States, United Nations system bodies and the private sector — should participate in the design of strategies aimed at advancing that collaboration. In that context, Colombia appreciated the contribution of the United Nations Global Compact in calling on private enterprises, civil society and Governments to promote and observe principles that were consistent with United Nations values. Colombia reaffirmed its commitment to those principles in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption.

19. The Global Compact Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Bogota, had been officially established in October 2009; it would support the actions of local networks and entrepreneurs from different countries, in fulfilment of the Global Compact values and the advancement of the regional agenda for social responsibility, competitiveness and development.

20. **Mr. Li** Kexin (China) said that development worldwide was currently faced with formidable challenges. The financial, food and energy crises, and climate change, had seriously undermined the development of the world economy and jeopardized the attainment of the MDGs. Strengthening global partnerships would assist in mobilizing resources from all sectors, helping the developing countries minimize the negative effect of the crises and consolidating the development results accumulated over the years. In order for global partnerships to play a larger role, they should operate in conformity with the national development strategies of partner countries.

21. Also, experience gained in the operation of partnerships should be summed up in a timely manner. Partnerships established with the private sector by the various components of the United Nations system had different ways of operating. It was thus necessary to keep open the channels of communication, enhance transparency and accountability and explore the most effective modes of cooperation. In addition, the independence and neutrality of the United Nations must be maintained. As there were many kinds of partnerships, the United Nations should specify screening criteria for selecting potential partners. At the same time, the assessment and monitoring of current partnerships should be enhanced so as to identify problems promptly and make corrections.

22. **Ms. Adam** (Switzerland) recalled that when the Committee had previously examined global partnerships, in 2007, the discussions had taken place in a completely different economic climate. A flourishing global economy had been benefiting most countries — albeit not all equally — and a liberalized market had been seen as a panacea for reducing poverty levels worldwide. Since then, a sequence of crises — and notably the financial and economic crisis — had raised doubts as to the validity of that model. The past year had seen a series of conferences and meetings which had sought to improve the structure of the financial and economic system. The Group of Twenty had taken the lead in redefining that system, while the United Nations was still seeking its role as the legitimate voice of all nations on an equal footing.

23. However, it could be said that the financial and economic crisis seemed to have bolstered rather than undermined the concept of partnerships between the United Nations and the private sector. It had, for instance, increased recognition by the private sector of the need for sustainable and ethical business practices. Governments for their part were providing an environment favourable to corporate social responsibility and it was encouraging to note that the corporate responsibility to respect human rights was increasingly acknowledged.

24. The Global Compact played a crucial role in promoting sustainable business practices and mainstreaming business partnerships. As the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative, it brought the values of the United Nations to the global business community by encouraging adherence to the Compact's 10 principles and action in support of the Organization's objectives, in particular the MDGs. The rise of its collaborative initiatives on the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment or the Principles for Responsible Management Education indicated that the environmental, social and governance agenda was gaining prominence among investors and academics.

25. Its extensive network and its understanding of business interests and public-private structures allowed the Global Compact to play a central role in facilitating and strengthening the United Nations partnership agenda at the system level, including by reaching out to local enterprises with a view to engaging them in partnerships. The coming year, 2010, would mark the 10th anniversary of that visionary initiative. It would be a moment to celebrate, but also to take stock. As a supporter right from its inception, Switzerland was looking forward to actively engaging in those activities.

26. With a view to strengthening the effectiveness and accountability of partnerships for development and allowing both sides to learn from each other, Switzerland supported the general orientation of the recommendations in the Secretary-General's 2009 report.

27. **Mr. Mero** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his country had been a beneficiary of the concept of global partnerships through various interventions including by the William J. Clinton Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and many other private sector initiatives. His Government saw the need to support global partnerships, because they came to the aid of Governments when they were unable to meet their objectives of serving their own people.

Draft resolution on Towards global partnerships

28. **Mr. Rutgersson** (Sweden), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.14, on behalf of the European Union, announced that Benin and Madagascar had joined the list of co-sponsors, and also drew attention to some editorial corrections to be made in the 11th preambular paragraph.

Agenda item 133: Programme planning

29. **The Chairperson** recalled that the General Assembly had decided to allocate item 133 to all the Main Committees and to the plenary to enhance discussions on evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring reports. Since at the present juncture there were no matters under the item that would require the Committee's attention, he proposed that the item should remain open until the Committee finished its work on 25 November, in case there was a need for the Committee to be seized of any issues under it.

30. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.